



Campton Lower School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109441
Local Authority BEDFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 288373
Inspection dates 31 October –1 November 2006
Reporting inspector Helen Ranger

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	First	School address	Rectory Road
School category	Community		Campton, Campton
Age range of pupils	4–9		Shefford, Bedfordshire
			SG17 5PF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01462 813359
Number on roll (school)	118	Fax number	01462 813359
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Dr Bill Radley
		Headteacher	Mrs Jaqueline Woodthorpe
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2001		

Age group 4–9	Inspection dates 31 October –1 November 2006	Inspection number 288373
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school currently takes only 13% of its pupils from the village of Campton. The remainder come from military families based at the Defence Intelligence and Security Centre (DISC) at Chicksands, or from a new private housing development on former military land. Pupils from the military families move house frequently, so that mobility in the school is very high. Three quarters of the Year 4 group who left in 2006 had joined the school later than usual and had often experienced several changes of school.

Most pupils are admitted with average attainment for their age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is average. A very small number of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and almost all speak English as their first or main language. Over the past two years there have been many changes of staff and governors. This included several headteachers until the appointment of the current headteacher last year. Most of the teaching staff are new to the school this term.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school correctly judges that its overall effectiveness is satisfactory. The past two years have been unsettled with almost the entire team of teachers changing and several of the governors. The headteacher is ensuring that the school is now providing a more consistent quality of education for its pupils than has been the case for a while.

Pupils make satisfactory progress. Most have reached at least average standards in recent years and the current Year 4 pupils are above average. Children in the Reception class are taught well and reach levels above those expected for their age. Teaching in the rest of the school is sound and is improving fast as the new staff get to know the pupils better. Any underachievement that resulted from the many changes of teacher is being successfully eradicated. This is being supported by recent improvements to the ways that individual pupils' progress is checked and tracked through the school. These systems need more time to have a full impact on raising standards. Pupils enjoy school. Their behaviour is satisfactory but a minority of pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties find it difficult to settle to their work. They receive a high quality of care from the staff. Staff also provide very good support for the many pupils who arrive part way through the school, including those from military families. The curriculum is satisfactory and being extended to include more effective links between subjects and more sporting activities.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Many of the staff and governors are getting used to their new roles and have yet to see the impact of initiatives they have started. Good leadership by the headteacher and the chair of governors reflects their clear vision. They have ensured that the new team is gelling very well and that the school is improving sufficiently. The staff are well motivated and beginning to have a positive effect on raising standards. They recognise that they and the new governors need to get to know the school better so that they can contribute fully to future developments. While parents' views of the school are mainly positive and supportive, they are understandably concerned about the impact of the many staff changes. The school has not communicated its recent successes and improvements clearly enough to some parents. It has an accurate view of its current strengths and weaknesses, appropriate plans to improve further and shows a secure capacity to succeed in its ambitions. Although it is early days with the current staff team, 'green shoots' are emerging that indicate many changes for the better and demonstrate the potential of the current management team.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use the improved arrangements for tracking pupils' progress rigorously to ensure individual needs are catered for effectively.
- Enable new staff and governors to gain a clear picture of the school so that they can identify what needs to be done next to raise standards further.
- Give parents a clearer understanding of how the school is changing and improving.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children in the Reception class do well because of the very good support they receive in all areas of learning. At this stage of the year, they progress particularly well in learning the basic routines and social skills they need to settle quickly in school. By Year 2 and Year 4 in most recent years, pupils have reached at least average standards. In 2005 standards were above average. Performance in 2006 dipped, partly as a result of the considerable number of staff changes. The school's tracking of the pupils who are now in Year 4, for example, shows some underachievement last year, especially in writing and mathematics. They are now doing well and building on the good potential they showed in the assessments made when they were in Year 2. As the staffing situation has settled, teaching and pupils' progress have improved in all age groups. Pupils' achievements are now at least satisfactory and they are rapidly making up any ground they lost last year. This includes those with learning difficulties and those from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory with good features. They enjoy school and this is reflected in excellent levels of attendance. Most behave well in class and in the playground, although they are often quite boisterous in their games. A minority have behavioural or emotional difficulties. These pupils sometimes find it hard to settle to their work and a few of the oldest pupils do not always set a good enough example to younger ones in their conduct around the school.

Pupils feel safe and well supported in school. They have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. They contribute well to the school community, for example through the school council. They generally, but not always, listen to others' opinions and act considerately. They are steadily developing the social and academic skills that will equip them for the next stage of their education and lay the foundations for their future lives in the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory with good features. Indications are that the quality of education is improving well as the new teachers have an impact on pupils' learning. Children in Reception enjoy a wide range of purposeful activities, combining good input from adults with plenty of their own choices. They showed great delight and imagination when making 'splatter' paintings of fireworks during the inspection. In all age groups, the teaching assistants give valuable support. This is especially effective for those who

need extra help with their work or behaviour. The staff work together well to ensure that minor incidents of unacceptable behaviour have a minimal impact on everyone's learning. Teachers and pupils are making very effective use of recently improved resources, such as those for information and communication technology (ICT). Most lessons satisfactorily meet the needs of the full range of attainment in each class, including those of the more able pupils. The improving assessment and tracking arrangements mean that teachers are gradually tailoring their planning even more closely to individual needs and ensuring that learning builds systematically on pupils' previous achievements. This is especially vital for the pupils who arrive from other schools.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is benefiting from recent improvements that have increased links between subjects to encourage pupils' enjoyment and interest. There is a good overall balance of activities. Pupils are being offered more opportunities to apply their computer skills to a wider range of subjects. This has been made possible because of substantial improvements to the levels of ICT resources, which are now good. All ages have the opportunity to learn French. Pupils are offered a reasonable range of clubs and visits. The variety of physical activities is now being enhanced by additional sporting links with the local middle school. The current staff have worked hard to improve the physical environment by improving decor and resources; these are appreciated by the pupils and supporting the quality of their learning well. Staff are also ensuring that pupils make a smooth transition in their work between this school and the middle school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a strength of the school. There are effective procedures to safeguard pupils and to provide a good standard of day-to-day pastoral care which parents value highly. Pupils with learning or behaviour difficulties are supported well by good individual education plans and the school makes use of specialist services in the local authority as appropriate. Pupils say that they have trusted adults they can turn to for support. Of particular note is the support the school offers to the many pupils who join the school at times other than the usual admission points. They are made welcome by staff and pupils, and quickly settle in their new classes. Pupils of all ages are set realistic learning targets and get regular support in reaching these through discussions with the staff and good quality feedback on their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has worked with the experienced and perceptive chair of governors over the past year to ensure that stability returns to the school and standards rise

again. They share appropriate plans for how the school can improve and both have the skills and determination to realise their ambitions. The current staff speak highly of the welcome and induction they received and of how well the adults in the school work together. Staff and governors are establishing a shared understanding of what they wish to achieve and of their roles in implementing and monitoring their plans. Responsibilities are delegated well and increasingly shared between new staff and new governors. The budget is being used well both to the benefit of the current pupils and to support the school's longer-term planning. The school provides satisfactory value for money. Productive partnerships are being established with other local schools. The next challenge for the school is to ensure that all its parents feel equally positive about its provision so that they can work in a true partnership to promote their children's learning.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

2 November 2006

Dear Children

Campton Lower School, Rectory Road, Campton, Shefford, SG17 5PF

This letter is to thank you all for your welcome when I visited recently. Special thanks go to the children in Year 3 and 4 who gave up some of their time to tell me about your school.

These are the best things I found:

- You enjoy being in school and get on well together.
- Those of you who have come from other schools get a good welcome and lots of help when you arrive.
- You like your teachers and feel that all the adults in the school care about you.
- I think your new teachers are settling in well and helping you to learn about lots of interesting things.
- Mrs Woodthorpe is working very hard with the staff and governors to make your school even better and I think that the plans for the future are good.

I have asked your school to make sure that a few things in particular get better:

- Your teachers have introduced some good ways of checking how you get on in your work and I want them to use this information to plan things that help you learn even faster.
- All the teachers and governors, especially those who are new, need to find out as much as they can about how the school works so that they know what should be improved next.
- Some of your parents have been worried about all the staff changes and I am sure that this has been unsettling for a lot of you too. I want the school to make sure your parents know about how things are changing and improving. When I visited I saw you doing plenty of interesting activities and you could make sure you tell your parents about the things you particularly enjoy about school.

Best wishes to you all

Mrs Helen Ranger

(Inspector)